

Getting Well

"It is only when people begin to laugh that sanity returns." -- Robert Moses

I thought it was distant thunder
but it was only me
beginning to laugh.

I began to stand.
My body
was telling jokes
on itself,
it was that strong.

I took out my brain
and looked at it.
It was titled
Best Humorous Stories of the Year.
I had written them all.

This was something new:
ticklish health.

I had spent years
working at serious
equations of fear.
The answers were perfect:
one side always equalled the other,
there was nothing absurdly left over.

Now I dress in funny hats,
my mother, my father,
my wife and children,
I wear them all.

I balance now,
a clown on a low wire.
I am saving myself to the last,
like a punchline.
My sanity is endless,
like the story of the shaggy dog.

I do not know how this happened.
I think that is funny.

The Fish of My Wife

They have followed her
for years. They are still
with her. In dreams.
In magazines, watching her.
Circling under floors.

Or she will start to speak
and they will come
rushing beautifully out,
like trout
over a falls.

She wants dishware
with fish fired
into them. She is always
showing them a thigh,
luring them on.

Ask her who, what,
they are, and she dives
openmouthed and innocent
away. But these
fish-stories circulate:

they have been known
to live years on
dry land; for counting
on sleepless nights,
they can leap over a life.

-- Philip Dacey

Cottonwood, MN

CHARLES! CHARLES!

Calling my name, you come running
thru the tall grasses
6-month bellyful of manchild
plums falling from your apron
and the wasps running
up and down
 inside your dress.

Blackburn Lake

An occasional fish leaps
at a mayfly fluttering by,
so I roll a cigarette
forget the next five minutes
and the busy highway
 fifty yards away
where I've either gotta thumb
or walk nine miles home
in the rain.